

Matthew 21-02-14b

We are back now and ready to resume our study. And the critical thing we're looking at here is what is the meaning of this miracle? What is the purpose of this miracle? Feeding of the 5,000, its meaning and its purpose. It is extremely important.

It is given to us not once, not twice, not thrice, but four times in the gospel accounts. Rare for that to happen, but it happens here because it is such a significant event and episode in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. So what does it mean? We come to the gospel of John to help us out.

Moving through Matthew, you can adduce this, you can deduce this, but it becomes so much more clearer with the help we gain in the gospel of John. So looking at it in its context in John chapter five, the father has testified, but you do not have his word abiding in you because whom he sent, you do not believe you search the scriptures for in them. You think you have eternal life.

And these are they which testify of me, but you are not willing to come to me that you may have life. This is the key. John chapter five, verse 38 through 40 is the key.

I suggest you write this in the margin of Matthew chapter 14, Mark chapter six, Luke chapter six, John chapter six, or it's actually Luke nine and, and, uh, John six, Matthew 14, Mark six, Luke nine, John six, feeding of the 5,000. This is the key circle. It put a star by it.

Everything becomes clear in this light. And it is a scary truth. It is a scary thing.

We had a great comment during the break about verse 39, you search the scriptures for in them. You think you have eternal life. Isn't that what we do? We are a Bible church.

We have spent countless hundreds, perhaps thousands of hours together studying the scriptures, searching the scriptures. What is the problem? If you're searching the scriptures, Jesus tells these Jews, you search the scriptures because you think that is where you're going to find eternal life, right? And isn't that what they should be doing? What is the problem? Look in the preceding verse, you do not have his word abiding in you. You can search the scriptures.

You can discuss the scriptures. You can analyze the scriptures. You think about these, uh, Jewish, uh, schools.

Remember, uh, Barbara Streisand made a movie years ago called Yentl, where she dressed up like a man and wanted to go to this school, wanted to learn, uh, to be a rabbi and to, to get into the discussions and, and the endless, uh, teasing out of fine details and all of the commentaries and the, the back and forth on Mishnah and Talmud on, on the scriptures. Lots of heat, lots of activity, lots of searching the scriptures, but without it

coming to abide and do its transforming work and be the voice of the Holy spirit and the voice of God in the heart. You can't just be associated with the scriptures in the same way that you can't attend a church and by osmosis grow spiritually.

You can't just listen to good teaching. You can't just read good books. You can't just have interesting discussions about the scriptures and grow and gain understanding and have the mysteries of God's plan and purpose revealed.

Just being around the scriptures is like just being around ammunition and guns. That doesn't make you a good shot. It doesn't make you a good reloader just because you've got tons of bullets and a lot of powder and a, and a, and a press.

It is in the using, it is in the abiding, it is in the experience where knowledge gnosis becomes experiential, habitual practice and expertise. Epi gnosis, you search the scriptures, but the scriptures do not abide in you. This is what Jesus says is the problem.

It is easy to fool ourselves. If you are a, a wannabe guitar player like I am, or you want to play the piano, you want to master an instrument. One of the pitfalls you have in the modern day is you can go online and you can buy sheet music and music books and chord books for guitar.

You can get the guitar chord encyclopedia. You can watch videos. You can get instruction from guys on YouTube.

You can be all around a musical instrument, whether it's piano or guitar or violin or mandolin or banjo or whatever it might be. And you can have all of the books. I've got half a shelf full of guitar books and there's not a song in them that I can actually play.

I am, I am a living example of, of this particular point, which is just associating with stuff doesn't imbue you with what you need. It is in the doing. If I get one of these books out and actually work through it and practice chord progressions, practice getting from one place to another on the neck of the guitar and getting my fingers in the right place and doing the proper plucking with my right hand, and I do that consistently over time, I can become a better guitar player.

I have done this from time to time. I have actually learned a couple of songs that my academy roommate didn't play and I just watched and imitated. I've taught myself a few songs.

I got tabs and worked through it measure by measure, chord by chord, string by string. And it's very gratifying to do that. That is the way to learn.

Just looking at the tabs and listening to somebody else play and buying the books isn't enough. Anything you want to learn, you want to learn another language. It takes inculcation.

It has to abide. It has to get inside us and be something that we practice. And it's a dangerous, dangerous thing.

Why do you think there are so many hundreds of different denominations? Why do you think there are so many widely various theological perspectives all working out of the very same Bible? Because a little bit here and a little bit there is latched onto, but there's not the abiding, there's not the actual presence of God in and through His Word. You can't see Him. You cannot see His form.

You cannot hear His voice. So it is the Word and the works of God that bear witness. Isn't this true when you go to the first chapter of Romans? Why is it that mankind is without excuse when it comes to salvation? What may be known of God is manifest in creation, in His works, what He has done.

His works bear witness of God. And He has put the Word of eternity, the Word of His existence in everyone's heart. And in this age, God the Holy Spirit comes and convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

Those are truths from God's Word. And they are truths that are imprinted in our consciousness. Everyone has that Word, our conscience, I should say.

And we become conscious of it, the Word and the works. But verse 38, you do not have His Word abiding in you. How do I know that? Because the one whom He sent, you don't believe.

If His Word was abiding in you, you would believe the one that God sends, because there is a connection, there is a continuity, there is a match there, there's consistency. This one cent matches everything I know in the Word. You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life.

You're searching the scriptures, and yet you have missed what the scriptures teach. This is our danger. This is what we have to watch out for.

Don't let Bible class be a searching of the scriptures, and yet the Word does not abide in us. We will miss God's peace. We will miss God's power.

We will miss God's plan. We will miss the function of our spiritual gift. We will miss the opportunity to be still and let God do what God does.

Sometimes the best operation of faith is to be still and know that I am God, he says, to wait on the Lord and renew our strength. They who wait upon the Lord renew their strength. They don't expend their strength searching the scriptures and never getting any strength from them, carried about by every wind of doctrine, every fresh trend, every new fad in the Christian world, every new book-selling ploy.

You've got everything from spirit-controlled temperament to the prayer of Jabez and the salt-shaker evangelism and purpose-driven life and experiencing God. The little boy went to heaven and came back and wants to tell us all the stuff that isn't found anywhere in scripture as though God is going to reveal important divine truth to some random toddler who has a case of low oxygen for a while and comes back and tells stories. That was a fad about 10 years ago.

There was a rash of books that came out, little people going to heaven and coming back and telling all kinds of stories about who they saw and people getting excited and wrapped up in that, even in families that ought to know better. Seminary-trained pastors going off the rails, being distracted and deflected and deceived in this way. You don't need a toddler to come back and tell you about heaven or anybody else with a near-death experience.

If His word abides in us, we can easily discern truth from error. If His word is abiding in us, we will easily discern when there is an instead-of Christ who doesn't match God's word, who doesn't comport. Israel in Jesus' day should have seen Him coming.

We have that phrase, I didn't see that coming. I should have seen that coming. They should have seen Jesus coming.

To them belong the mysteries. Read Romans 8, 9, 10, 9, 10, and 11. To Israel belongs the word.

They are stewards of the oracles of God, and they missed it. How tragic would it be for us in this church with all of the experience of the word of God that we have had to miss it and miss out because we search the word, but it doesn't abide in us. The abiding comes by spending time, quality time, away from devices, away from a steady stream of heads talking and analyzing and trends and tweets and texts and all of the other things.

Satan likes nothing better than to get our attention elsewhere. This is how magicians do their magic, their sleight of hand. I want your attention over here while I do something I don't want you to see elsewhere.

I don't want you to see me getting the card that's up my sleeve. I don't want you to see me getting the rabbit from under the table and putting it in the hollow hat. I don't want you to see me swap the deck of cards.

I don't want you to notice. I want you to be looking elsewhere. Well, there's never been as many elsewheres as there are today to look, and what we need to do is go into our closet, as the King James said.

Remember when they used to say in English 100 years ago, someone was closeted, means they were in a private place. Going into your closet in the King James English meant go to the spot where you can hang a do not disturb sign and spend a few minutes

thinking, reflecting, ruminating, marinating in the word of God and pray that truth up to God. The disciples came back from their teaching trip and told Jesus what they had taught.

Does Jesus not know what they taught? He taught them to teach what they taught, but they came back and told him anyway. And this is like coming back to your teacher and rehearsing what you have learned, and the teacher is nodding their head saying, that's right. You got it.

That was good. That was a great point. What kind of response did you get? Well, we covered this.

We retold that parable that you told. We were able to explain it, and there were some people in the crowd that got it, but a lot of the others were confused. But this is what we told them.

This is what we said. And in the retelling and in the rehearsing, all of you know this, the best way to learn a thing is to teach it. And so Jesus gives his disciples the opportunity to go out and rehearse, to present and to repeat and to review what they have learned.

And it clicks into place as they practice it, as it abides in them. When the word abides in us, we've got it with us to share and to speak in love to one another. But it cannot be something we just look at, seeing they see and do not perceive, hearing they hear and they do not understand.

Don't let this be us. Don't let this be the evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ. How many times did you look at the word, but you didn't really see it? How many times did you hear the word taught in Bible class and it didn't really penetrate at best? It was seed in shallow soil that sprung up in a day, created joy.

But when the heat came, you immediately forgot all about it and did just exactly what any untaught, unspiritual person would do. You went the way of the world. You went the way of the flesh.

You went the way of the distracted and the deflected and those who rely on human energy and human solutions. The arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own.

Put on the gospel armor. You'll recognize those words from one of our great hymns. You do not have his word abiding in you.

This is the key. When the word comes, you see it, you talk about it, but it doesn't stick with you. Now, if the bread symbolizes the word, think about this now.

If the bread symbolizes the word and Jesus distributes bread through his disciples, there are messengers. There are those who carry the bread to the people and the people are

in small groups, groups of 50 to 50 sitting together. You could call it a group of a hundred.

You remember in one of the previous gospels, it said somewhere in fifties and somewhere hundreds, no group larger than a hundred. If you want to know what a good group size is for a church, 50, a hundred at most with a disciple coming and distributing bread that comes from the Lord. Jesus represents him, communicates him, testifies to him, not politics, not social commentary, not calls to action for social justice.

The word testifies of Jesus. We should always come back to the cross. We should always come back to the father.

Jesus said, if you're looking at me and talking about me and recognizing me, I am one sent and you're actually coming back to the one who sent me. I am the way, the truth and the life. You come to the father through me.

Coming to the Lord Jesus is coming to the father. These people that Jesus is talking to in John chapter five, you do not believe the one that God sent because you don't have his word abiding in you and you're missing it. So then when you go to John chapter six, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, great multitude followed him because they saw his signs, which he performed on those who were diseased.

Why are they following? Lord, we really want some more of that great teaching and parables that we didn't understand. Why are they following him? Because they saw his signs, which he performed on those who were diseased. Now they see the signs.

Do they understand the signs? Do the signs tell them that this is the one that the father has sent? Jesus said, if you don't believe me, believe the works. It is they which testify of me. We'll see that here shortly.

Jesus went up on a mountain, sat with his disciples. Passover was near. Jesus lifted up his eyes, seeing the multitude coming toward him.

He said to Philip, where shall we buy bread that these may eat? This he said to test him for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, two hundred denarii worth of bread isn't sufficient for them that every one of them may have a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, there's a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many? Jesus said, make the people sit down.

There was much grass in the place. The men sat down in number about five thousand. Remarkable consistency across the gospel accounts when it comes to these numbers.

The numbers are exactly the same in every independent gospel account. Jesus took the loaves. When he had given thanks, he distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples

distributed them to those sitting down.

Likewise, the fish, as much as they wanted, circle it. In verse 11, the last phrase, the disciples distributed to everyone as much as they wanted. When they were filled, circle it.

They took as much as they wanted, and when they were filled, Jesus said to his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain so that nothing is lost. I want a careful accounting for the bread and the fish. Jesus is going to take inventory.

Why? Does it matter if people just drop this bread and uneaten fish on the ground and it dissolves and goes back to nature? Why does Jesus want this accounting? It's going to become clear. The disciples gather up and fill 12 baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Evidently, they didn't pick up the fish.

They just picked up the loaves. Then those men, when they had seen the Jesus did, said what? This truly is the prophet who is to come into the world. Where does that information come from? The Word.

The Word of God said, there will be another prophet like Moses. Moses prays to God, and manna comes down from heaven. This man prays to God, and bread multiplies in his hands.

It's a sign that he is the prophet who is to come into the world. Those men, when they had seen the sign, said, this is the prophet who is to come into the world. Now, when they tried to come and make him king, in verse 15 of John 6, he departed again to the mountain by himself alone, sends the disciples into the boat, walks on the water.

On the following day, verse 22, when the people were standing on the other side of the sea, saw there was no other boat there except the one which his disciples had entered, that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples. It talks about other boats. People saw Jesus was not there in verse 24, nor his disciples.

They got into boats and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here? Jesus answered and said, Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. We're still talking about the word of God abiding, and those who have that word know how to interpret these signs.

They know what it means, that he is the one sent by God. Jesus, this is a condemnation, although they don't really understand that it is. You're seeking me, not because you saw the signs, not because you are those who say this truly is the prophet who is to come into the world, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

You got a momentary need solved. You had a headache, and I was your aspirin. I was your ibuprofen.

I was your Tylenol. You were hungry, and you got filled, and you like that. You like the meeting of an immediate short-term need, and that's why you're looking for me.

You're not looking for me because you saw the signs. And when he says saw the signs, he means understood and realized the spiritual import of them. You're dealing in the physical realm, not the spiritual realm.

You had a physical need met, and you think that's great, and you want more of that. How many people go to church because they get a need met? Well, I need a friend. I need some entertainment.

I need someone for my kids to associate with. I need support. I need encouragement.

I need somebody to listen to me when I want to talk about my problems. I need activities. I need sort of a built-in fellowship that doesn't ground itself in spiritual things.

It's like a club. You can make a club for anything. You can be in ham radio.

You can be in gardening. You can be in 4-H or do things for the county fair. You can be in quilting or pie making or raising stock and getting together with other people that raise cattle or goats or other hobby interests.

And it gives you something in common. It gives you someone to talk to. It gives you a circle of acquaintance.

You can pass the time. You can commiserate. You can talk about the weather or whatever.

Nothing intrinsically wrong with that. But it is not a substitute for spiritual life and spiritual growth. Listen, I'm involved in a lot of things with a lot of people.

And there's nothing wrong with having a hobby. Nothing wrong with enjoying talking to people about it. You can do reloading.

You can play chess. You can get into ham radio. I do all of those things.

And it's a lot of fun. Computers. Any number of things.

You can have a wide variety of interests. But not at the expense of and not in the place of spiritual life. You seek me.

You're coming to Jesus. Not for spiritual life. Not because the Father sent Him.

But it's another interest. It's another hobby. Let's watch this guy do miracles.

And let's see if we can get some more free bread. Coming to God, but coming for the wrong reasons. Searching the scriptures, but not so that you can have them abide.

Not have them define us. So Jesus says in verse 27, do not labor for the food which perishes. You got into boats.

You all the way around the lake. You've been following around looking for more free bread because it's gratifying in the short term. Do not labor for the food which perishes.

It's short term. Doesn't last. But for the food which endures with a view toward everlasting life.

Ace. Into. Unto.

With a view toward. When you're talking about physical things, it is into or unto. When you talk about immaterial things, it means with a view toward.

Food which endures with a view toward everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you. Don't follow me around for more multiplied loaves and fishes. The Son of Man will give you food which endures to everlasting life.

Because God the Father has set his seal on him. God the Father has defined him and identified him through his word and through these signs. They said, well, what shall we do that we may work the works of God? Jesus says, this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he sent.

Him whom he sent. It's all about being sent from the Father. They said, well, what sign will you perform then that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate manna in the desert.

As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. They still want him to do the physical bread thing. He just got through telling him.

And it's just water off a duck's back. So, you're looking at the bread. I've already done the signs so that you should believe.

But you do not believe because you do not have the word of the Father abiding in you. You have already established an attitude that prevents you from seeing what is standing right in front of you. You wouldn't be asking for bread if you knew that you're talking to the bread.

You're listening to the bread, you're seeing the bread, and you're asking for bread. What's the matter with you? What's the matter with us? When we have God's Word, we have His Spirit, and we're still looking for answers, we're still looking for peace, we're still looking for eternal life and its benefits and effects now. We're occupied with the physical and not with the spiritual.

They said, Lord, give us this bread always. Jesus said, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

Now, we've come to Him, and we believe in Him. Do you ever get hungry? Like every day? Do you ever get thirsty? Every day? What kind of hunger and thirst is He talking about? What did we hear in the teaching on the hill, the Sermon on the Mount? Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

I've already told you what your problem is. Now look at verse 37. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out.

Calvinists to a man will quote you this verse and say, see, the Father only gives Jesus certain people. True. That's true.

What the Reformed theologian and what the Calvinist does not understand is, why does God give? Who does God give? Those who have His word. Those who are looking. Those who identify.

There is a basis upon which God is going to give individuals to the Lord Jesus. In this generation in Israel, Jesus is going to say, my sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. And the Father is giving me those people.

The people who believe in Jesus during this three and a half year ministry are to a man going to turn into Christians at Pentecost and become body of Christ. Right? All that the Father gives me will come to me. Okay? Who does the Father give to Jesus? Everyone who comes to Him.

Everyone who has the word of the Father abiding in them. Everyone who sees the signs and understands them, which is not these people. They're standing there looking at the bread, asking for bread.

They have seen the sign. They ate the bread yesterday and they're asking Jesus to perform a sign so that they can believe. They want God to meet their standard instead of recognizing that God has already satisfied His own standard by sending the Son that He foretold in the Old Testament and has given Him these signs to perform to authenticate.

The signs are His ID card. People are looking at His ID card saying, have you got any ID? Have you got something else? This card doesn't work for me. I need you to identify yourself in some other way.

The word is not abiding in them. This is not some inscrutable election in the mysterious mind of the Father in eternity past. All the Father has given me will come to me.

Jesus has been describing since John chapter 5 who it is that comes to Him. Who it is that

recognizes that God has sent Him. Those are the ones that God is going to give to Him.

And the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out. I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. Him who sent me.

If you went through this chapter and the preceding one and circled all the times that Jesus says it's about the one who sent me. When you don't have His word you don't recognize me. He sent His word and you didn't accept it.

Now He has sent His living word, the word that was with God and the word that is God and you're not believing it either. God's not going to give you to me because you have opted out already. You opted out at the point that you didn't let His word abide in you.

This is the will of the Father who sent me that of all He has given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up at the last day. Those who love the Father have His word abiding in them. This is the will of Him who sent me that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life and I will raise Him up at the last day.

The one who sees and believes. Why is it that these people do not believe? Go back to John chapter 5. You do not have His word abiding in you, verse 38, because whom He sent Him you do not believe. Why do they not believe? Not because they weren't given to Jesus by the Father as the Calvinist says, but because they don't have God's word abiding.

They've already made this choice. Well this brings us to verses 41 through 59 when the Jews are complaining about Him because He said I am the bread which came down from heaven. They don't like this idea.

They don't grasp it. They don't get it just like they didn't understand the parables. And the same thing we saw in Matthew.

Is this not Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? How is it that He says I've come down from heaven? Dwelling in the physical, rationalizing from the physical, finding a way to explain away Jesus' words. Jesus said don't murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day.

He already said raise it up at the last day in verse 39 and in verse 40. You can't come unless the Father, circle it, who sent me draws him. The Father cannot draw someone who doesn't accept His word.

Who doesn't allow the Father's word to abide in him. God does not draw people against their will. He doesn't take unregenerate, totally depraved people and thump them in the head with a faith stick, regenerate them and pull a puppet string so that they will believe.

No one can come to me unless the Father draws him and the Father doesn't draw him when He rejects the Father and rejects the Father's word and rejects the signs that the Father sent to authenticate the one whom He sent. When you reject the testimony, the Father does not draw you and you can't come to Jesus if you're not drawn. And you're not drawn if you reject the word.

When you reject the word, you reject the signs. When you reject the signs, you reject the person that God sent. Reject the word, reject the signs, reject the Lord.

God does not draw such an individual and you can't come to the Lord Jesus if the Father does not draw you. It is written in the prophets, they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

Circle it. Verse 45, if you have heard and learned from the Father, you come to me. The Father draws you.

Do not understand why reformed theology people, and I was talking to some this past week, cannot get this through their heads. It's all about the bread. Jesus is going to make a point about this bread in the feeding of the 5,000, the feeding of the 4,000, and on the boat when the disciples bring no bread.

And Jesus reviews the miracle of the 5,000 and the feeding of the 4,000 and says, do you not yet understand? It's all about this bread. And the bread represents that which comes from the Father in all of all four gospels. Jesus raises his eyes toward heaven when he breaks this bread because my Father gives you bread from heaven.

What do you do with the bread? You start out with not enough and you end up with 12 baskets of that which is not abiding in the people. Your final point for this morning, if you start with five loaves and two fishes and it's not near enough, how do you end up feeding 5,000 men and their families in groups of 50 on the ground and take up 12 full baskets of fragments? If the bread is the word and people got enough and were full, how are there 12 baskets of fragments? Did Jesus unintentionally make too much or did he make as much as they were supposed to eat and they were satisfied with so little that they set aside all the rest of the bread that God gave them? And the bread does not abide in them. They didn't eat it.

They set it aside and it's collected in inventory. The bread from heaven is not accepted. It is not imbibed.

It is not consumed. It does not abide in them. And the measure of that rejection is 12 baskets full, one for each of the tribes of Israel.

The bread from heaven has come. It is miraculously provided. It is accompanied by and authenticated by a miracle even in the delivery of it.

And 12 baskets of fragments come back. You wonder if even the original five loaves got consumed by these 5,000 people when 12 baskets of fragments come back. You do not, believe me, because you do not have the word of the Father abiding in you.

That's the problem. And he demonstrates it in the feeding of the 5,000. So important that we don't just search the Scriptures, but we internalize them.

We think about them. We pray over them. We define ourselves in them and by them.

What we think and what we do, how we act and what we choose, what we say, how we invest our time ought to be defined by that living and abiding word of God. Don't have a disciple come by with a basket and have a bunch of bread left over. It needs to be inside us and you can only do that, not just by coming to Bible class and taking a few notes, but by setting aside time to reflect.

How many times have we quoted Psalm 1? Tree by the rivers of water. You don't delight in the ways of the world. Your delight is in the law of the Lord and we reflect on it.

We meditate on it. We think about it day and night. That's the path to eternal life.

We'll have more to say about this in our upcoming study but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for this bread from heaven that is ultimately summed up, the fullness of deity and bodily form, the Lord Jesus himself, the living word.

We pray that as we do think about and reflect on these truths that your Holy Spirit will minister them to our hearts so that we can enjoy the full benefit of your dwelling and the Lord Jesus dwelling and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and with us to lead us and to guide us, to sanctify us and to thoroughly equip us for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.